

Get up! Stand up! Show up!

10 July 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge that we gather for worship this morning on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the custodians of this place since the dreaming time.

We pay respects to their Elders – past, present and emerging – and in the words from NAIDOC week we commit ourselves to **stand up**, **show up** and **speak up** with the First Peoples of this land as they struggle to seek justice.

WELCOME

Welcome to those gathering here at Croydon North and those at Croydon and watching on Zoom from home.

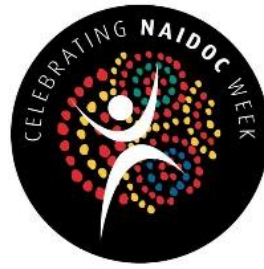
Today we will be thinking about NAIDOC week – the opportunity to learn and to celebrate the contribution of aboriginal and islander peoples. Our readings illustrate God's heart for justice as revealed in the OT prophets and then a classic parable from Jesus exploring how we often seem to ignore the needs of our neighbour.

INTRODUCING TODAY'S THEME ...



Among many words and stories shared at Synod last weekend ... there were challenging messages from indigenous leaders in Victoria and Tasmania ... I don't think I heard them say the word **reconciliation**, but I did hear the word **justice** a lot ... and **struggle** ... and **survival** ... and **perseverance**.

This past week has been **NAIDOC week** – National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee – whose origins go back to 1938 which was the first organized attempt to tell a different story about Australia Day – that for indigenous people it was not a happy day but rather a day of **mourning** – mourning for land that had been forcibly taken from them, children stolen, language silenced, culture mocked as dying.



**GET UP!
STAND UP!
SHOW UP!**
3-10 JULY 2022

There is still a long way to go in our walk with indigenous people, but there are some hopeful signs ... the regular practice of acknowledging that we live on aboriginal land and that we need to listen to indigenous voices and their wisdom and resilience.

The challenge before us is to take seriously the words of this year's NAIDOC theme – to **Get up! Stand up! Show up!** ... so that we might become allies and advocates for and with our local indigenous brothers and sisters. And to do this not just for one day or one week but every day and every week.



I'm not sure what this will look like going forward, but the challenge from the Assembly of the Uniting Church is to walk with First People **in our local neighbourhood** ... to get to know them and listen to their stories.

BIBLE READING

[Amos 1:1, 5:1-15, 21-24](#)

The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa – the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.

Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you:

'Fallen is maiden Israel,
never to rise again,
deserted in her own land,
with no one to lift her up.' ...

Seek the Lord and live,
or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire;

it will devour them,
and Bethel will have no one to quench it.
Ah, you who turn justice into bitterness
and cast righteousness to the ground. ...
... those who hate the one who upholds justice in court
and detest the one who tells the truth.
You levy a straw tax on the poor
and impose a tax on their grain. ...
You oppress the innocent and take bribes
and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.
Seek good, not evil,
that you may live.
Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you,
just as you say he is.
Hate evil, love good;
maintain justice in the courts.
Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy
on the remnant of Joseph. ...
'I hate, I despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.
Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.
Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

[Luke 10:25-37](#)

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'
'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?'
The lawyer answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"
'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'
But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'
In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and

when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

'Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'

The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'

Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'

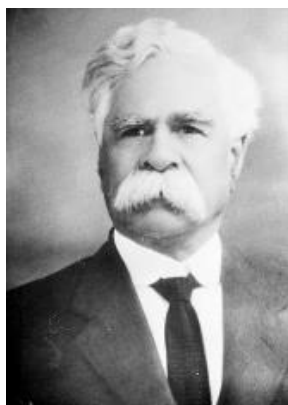
MESSAGE Get up! Stand up! Show up!



This is NAIDOC week – an opportunity given to us each year to listen and learn more about indigenous culture, history and achievements.

Perhaps we admire indigenous sporting heroes like **Cathy Freeman** or **Buddy Franklin** or **Ash Barty**.

You might have seen a program on ABC TV this week called '**Looking black**' exploring how aboriginal people and their stories have been portrayed on TV ... from early cringe worthy efforts to more recent efforts like *Total Control* or *Mystery Road*.



The Christian community *Common Grace* encourages us to learn more about indigenous leaders like **William Cooper**, who now has a Federal electorate named after him in inner northern suburbs of Melbourne. Cooper was born on Yorta-Yorta country in northern Victoria and became a Christian in his early 20s. His faith provided a framework for his later fight for indigenous justice, equality and full citizenship for Aboriginal peoples. He asked Australian churches to set aside the Sunday before

January 26 as Aboriginal Sunday, a day for Christians to act in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples and the injustices they have experienced. This day was eventually moved to July and enlarged to become NAIDOC Week.

Along with others, Cooper established the Australian Aborigines League, petitioned

King George VI for Aboriginal representation in Parliament, and was part of the 1938 Day of Mourning protest on Australia Day. In his latter years he was a mentor to **Sir Doug Nicholls**, who was a well-known preacher, footballer, activist and later Governor of South Australia.

The theme for NAIDOC week this year is **Get up! Stand up! Show up!**

At one level, this theme remembers and celebrates the long history of indigenous people in this country getting up, standing up and showing up – whether to defend their lands against the colonisers or fighting to be recognised as Australian citizens in the 1967 referendum. The same tenacity and resilience is seen in current efforts to protect places of environmental and cultural significance, changing the Constitution to allow a voice to Parliament, establishing a comprehensive process of truth-telling, working towards treaties, or calling out entrenched racism.



But the theme is also an invitation to us the Second Peoples – the non-indigenous people of this country – to move beyond simply **acknowledging** indigenous people and to **aspire** and **act** to see changed outcomes, true justice and working to make indigenous rights a reality.

In short, a call to be **advocates** and **allies** with indigenous people.

I want to read you a poem written by Alison Overeem who is a leading figure in The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress of Tasmania. It reflects the strength of aboriginal people to stand up and show up in the face of great struggles and difficulty.

Our ancestors' strength both in the now and before
from the colonial invasion of our shore:
the colonization landed,
but culture was never abandoned.

The removal of mob from lands
but strength lies in the comfort of our ancestors' hands.

The dispossession and the frontier wars constant and relentless, dispersing
unity, but the strength came from the compass of culture, community and
country.

The invasion of sovereign people, of lands and waterways,
but the strength to persevere sits deeply within us, from those dark days for
always.

Our people stood proud.
Our people's voices always loud.
Our people's determination
to right the wrongs of this nation.

Through the hardship, our people's voices did not fall,
guarded and accompanied by the Creator's call.
The strength within to change policies around land, language, storylines and
songlines echoed in the wind and the trees.

It called us to continue to be the leaders of change, at our core
what was and is the spirit calling to us from the colonial war.

Our resilience.
Our protection.
Our call to stand
sits in and with the connection to land.

For those brave warriors in the past
our legacy to continue to get up, stand up and show up runs deeply within us.
We are custodians of the warrior spirit, custodians of a voice for change,
accompanied by our ancestors, Elders and leaders.

So our call to all is to lean into the resilience, spirituality and faith
that sits at the heart – the takila – of who we are as church, who we are as a
nation.

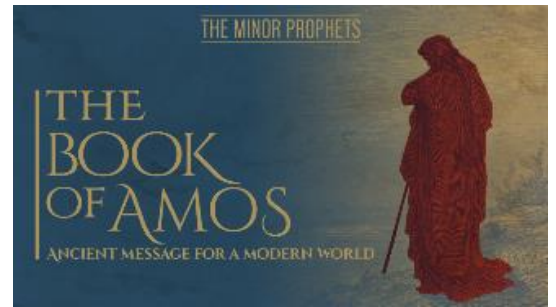
Praise be to the Creator
forever present in these lands now called Australia.

Thanks be the UAICC
the takila – heart – of the UCA.
Be ready, listen, learn in stillness.
Listen and learn in courage.

Get up. Stand up, Show up.

Changing gears, we turn to our Scripture readings for today.

Amos is a reluctant prophet called to speak about justice to the northern kingdom of Israel. His message is directed especially to the leadership of Israel and to the wealthy who are living in luxury at the expense of the poor.



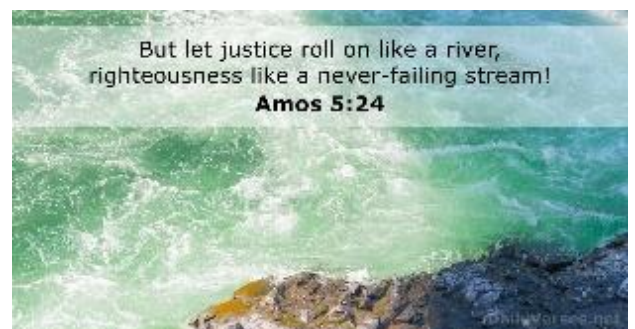
In chapter 5 we come to the heart of Amos' message, which is to **seek good** and **love good**, which ties it in with Paul's call from the end of the letter to the Galatians from last week. For Amos, seeking good involves letting **justice roll down like a river**. It means not taxing the poor, not taking bribes, caring for the needy.

By contrast, Amos contends that the wealthy love to do evil – oppressing the poor and ignoring the righteous ways of God, going through the motions of worshipping God but also worshipping other gods. The leaders see all this but

turn a blind eye.

Amos suggests there can be no true or acceptable worship without justice.

And here's the link back to NAIDOC week.

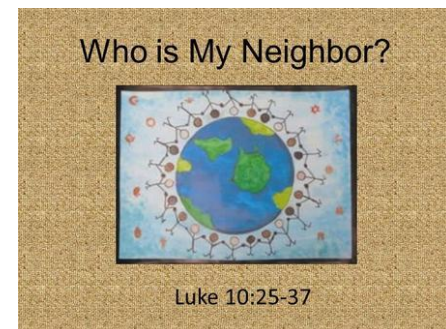


The indigenous people of this country are crying out for justice ...

- That their voice and their concerns would be heard in Parliament
- That the obvious gaps in health, housing and life expectancy would be addressed
- That racist attitudes would not be tolerated in police forces, social welfare or the criminal justice system

In short, indigenous peoples echo the call of Amos for justice to roll down like a river!

Then we have the well-known parable from Luke that is inspired by a lawyer asking Jesus **'Who is my neighbour?'**. Who is the person I'm expected to care about deeply and extend kindness to?
How much should I help them?
Give me some hard and fast **rules**.



Jesus responds with a story that is filled with **people** and **pity** rather than rules. An anonymous person is travelling alone and is attacked by robbers. Two worthy and respected figures travel down the same road – a priest and Levite – both of whom know God's ways well. Both see the

person lying by the side of the road but pass by, apparently unmoved.

Then a despised Samaritan passes by and stops to help. The Samaritan is kind, loving and caring – the example of a good neighbour. We are told to go and do likewise.



When we look at the world we may well want to echo the lawyer's question – **Who is my neighbour?** Needy people are everywhere – from places of major conflict like Ukraine and Afghanistan, from Sri Lanka to South Sudan.

Are these people my neighbour?

Is it those interstate suffering dreadful floods for the third time in six months? Or is my neighbour those who are hungry, lonely or homeless around the Croydon area? Jesus doesn't answer this question.

So then perhaps we start to think about the **examples** offered to us in the parable. Are we like the priest and the Levite, knowing what we're called to do but reluctant to get involved because it's **inconvenient** or **costly**, or both? Or are we more like the Samaritan, letting our hearts be moved with **compassion**?

If we were an indigenous person, we would probably most closely identify with the beaten up person lying on the side of the road, a recipient of violence and rejection. So if the person in need is indigenous, will **we** get up, stand up and show up to help

them? Are we prepared to become involved, not just for an hour but over the longer haul as the Samaritan was?

But perhaps we ourselves are suffering, lonely, sick, or anxious ... perhaps **we** are the ones lying at the side of the road in need of help. Perhaps we are waiting for help from a passing stranger, even from Jesus himself who comes to us unexpectedly, with compassion to comfort us, to mend our brokenness and to restore our faith ... so that we might once again be renewed and ready to do what we can to help those in need around us.

The thing about this parable is that it doesn't encourage us to **think** too much about what we could or should be doing. It asks us instead to **go** and **do**, allowing ourselves to be moved with compassion and then following our instincts as to what to do without putting limits or rules around it.

As with the call from NAIDOC week. Jesus asks us to **get up, stand up and show up** ... and who knows where exactly that may lead us?

